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SUBJECT: TAJIK PITCHES INITIATIVES FOR THE OSCE

¶1. (U) Tajik Ministry of Foreign Affairs Director for International Organizations, Nuriddin Shamsov, called in the deputy chief of mission February 5 to discuss Tajik issues at the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. The resident Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe mission confirmed that Shamsov has been sounding out representatives from all member countries with embassies in Dushanbe to discuss the same two initiatives: reclassifying the resident mission as a Project Office, and moving the Economic Forum from Prague to Dushanbe. Tajik representatives have also pitched these proposals to missions in Vienna.

From Center to Project Office

¶2. (SBU) Shamsov explained the proposal to reclassify the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's field presence in Tajikistan as a "Project Office." According to Shamsov, the change is justified in recognition that Tajikistan has "achieved a certain level of stability and development" since the end of the civil war. As evidence he pointed to the "successful presidential election" last November. The deputy chief of mission reminded Shamsov that the Organization for Security and Cooperation's own observer mission determined that the election did not meet international standards and was not a true test of democratic principles. Nevertheless, Shamsov said Tajikistan believes the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe should focus in Tajikistan on the economic basket, rather than politico-military or human dimension. Tajikistan currently hosts the largest Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe center in Central Asia, but its projects are ineffective, Shamsov argued. Reorganizing the in-country center as a project office would improve the delivery of assistance. The deputy chief of mission asked about project assistance outside the economic basket, such as small arms/light weapons, demining, and a new border project initiated at the Tajik government's request. Shamsov said of course those projects should continue. He refused to be pinned down on what activities would cease under the proposed reorganization.

From Prague to Dushanbe

¶3. (SBU) Tajikistan has also made an appeal in Vienna and now among member states with embassies in country to move the Economic Forum from Prague to Dushanbe. Shamsov argued that the "new post-Soviet reality" in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe argues for more focus on Asia. Shamsov asserted that no country better demonstrates the connection between economic issues and security and stability than Tajikistan. The deputy chief of mission pointed out that

limited air connections to Dushanbe and a shortage of quality hotel space make hosting any international event difficult and expensive. Shamsov admitted the Ministry had not calculated a budget for hosting the Forum or given much thought yet to the practicalities. Asked whether the initiative had the support of Tajikistan's neighbors or other former Soviet republics, Shamsov said "no commitments yet."

Comment

14. (SBU) Tajikistan believes strongly in these two initiatives as evidenced by its concerted push among member states here and in Vienna. So far the Foreign Minister has not raised these issues in his bilateral meetings with the Ambassador, but the issues would undoubtedly come up during a visit by U.S. ambassador to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Julie Finley, in March. The Foreign Ministry views these moves as fully justified in recognition of Tajikistan's significant progress since the end of its civil war and emergence of Tajikistan, according to Shamsov, as "the most stable country in Central Asia." Shamsov was aware that Tajikistan's proposal to downgrade the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's presence appeared similar to moves by Uzbekistan, Russia and other countries in the neighborhood to weaken the multilateral institution's mandate. He seemed genuine in his insistence that these initiatives are not part of a coordinated effort to undermine the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Tajikistan appears to have given no thought to the practical steps necessary to make these initiatives a reality. Shamsov could not respond to questions about how the Organization for Security and Cooperation's activities would change in Tajikistan under a reorganization or how much it would cost to host the Economic Forum in Dushanbe.

JACOBSON